

## Meetings of the Jackson Purchase Historical Society 2018-2019

We continued to observe our Sixtieth Anniversary in the second half of 2018 and offered six programs between July 2018 and May 2019.

On July 21 we met at the offices of the Purchase Area Development District. The guest speaker for the meeting was Tom Jones of New Braunfels, Texas. Jones has written two books about the great migration from Graves County, Kentucky to Akron, Ohio. His grandparents, Haskell and Florence Jones, were great storytellers and Jones had recorded, edited, and indexed the oral



history of the family. At the time, it was more a desire to not lose his family history as members died, but then he realized that no one had written anything of this nature. It became a labor of love to publish the stories of his family and what a delightful presentation he gave to the JPHS members and guests! Jones started with the origins of his family tree and moved on to how education was at the time, what type of work was available and how politics played a part, and finally, gave an overview of the movement to Ohio to work in the rubber mills. Jones ended his talk with a suggestion for the audience to listen to Bobby Osborne's song, "Kentucky Morning." (Using pictures and video, the song tells of this time when many Kentuckians were moving out-of-state to find

work so they could help their families left behind at home.) Thank you, Tom Jones, for sharing your family with the JPHS!

*(Melissa Webb Earnest)*

*Note: Mr. Jones' books have won awards from both the Ohio and Kentucky Historical Societies.*

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At the JPHS meeting in Clinton, Kentucky on Saturday, September 22nd, Dr. William (Bill)



H. Mulligan, Jr. spoke about modernizing warfare and how U. S. Grant and military engineering made an impact on the outcome of the Civil War. Mulligan focused on four main areas – the construction of forts, Grant and military strategy, Vicksburg, and railroad workers at Columbus. Intertwined were stories of Grant's upbringing, education, and family life. Grant emphasized speed and did not hesitate to move forward. He led from the front and did not want to give the enemy time to build fortifications and train. Grant had the ability to see what was coming and some

of his superiors did not get this ability, but President Lincoln did. Grant always kept his troops at the ready. Grant is a very interesting character in history, serving later as the President of the United States. Mulligan noted that Grant's superior at the start of the Civil War had written the book on traditional warfare, but during the war, Grant was, in a sense, re-writing it. The Civil War is considered the first modern war in the world. Mulligan kept the audience both entertained and educated with his expertise on Ulysses S. Grant.

*(Melissa Webb Earnest)*

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We broke with our tradition of holding the November meeting in Martin to meet at the



Reelfoot Lake State Park on November 3rd. Reelfoot Lake State Park is at the western edge of our service area, but the meeting enjoyed very good turnout. A lot of familiar faces; lots of new people, too. Society member David Hayes discussed the early history of the Reelfoot Lake region and its development after the lake was formed by the New Madrid Earthquakes of 1811 - 1812, estimated to have been more

powerful than any earthquake ever in North America. A thirty-foot upthrust of the earth – not only created the lake, but caused the Mississippi to run backward for several days. There is more, which is covered in his book. His presentation was thorough, methodical, and persuasive (he's a former prosecutor) but also riveting. After a break for lunch – many enjoyed an excellent local restaurant, Boyette's – we took a boat tour of the lake – saw the uplift and other natural features and also saw herons, egrets, pelicans, cormorants, eagles, a large turtle, and more.

*(William H. Mulligan, Jr.)*



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2019 is the one hundred seventy fifth anniversary of the founding of Murray. To observe the event we focused the program on a Murrayan who played a major role in the Civil Rights movement. On Saturday, January 26th, the Jackson Purchase Historical Society hosted a lecture on Theodore Roosevelt Mason (T.R.M) Howard at the Wrather Museum at Murray State University. The lecture was a joint presentation, given by David T. Beito, of the University of Alabama, and Linda Royster Beito, of Stillman College. Linda Beito began the lecture by documenting Howard's early life, including his influencers and the relationships he developed in Murray. She particularly noted the impact that Will Mason, a local doctor, had on Howard. Mason mentored Howard and eventually sponsored his college education. Beito discussed Howard's early medical career beginning as a physician at an all African-American



hospital in the rural Mississippi Delta and then establishing his own clinics.



David Beito continued the lecture, focusing on Howard's Civil Rights activism. Howard founded the Regional Council of Negro Leadership (RCNL). Beito also discussed one of RCNL's most successful campaigns, the "Don't Buy Gas Where You Can't Use the Restroom" campaign, which provided supporters thousands of bumper stickers featuring the slogan. Beito also discussed how Howard opened his home to the family of Emmett Till and national civil rights groups during the Emmett Till murder trial. As a harbinger for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Howard was instrumental in passing the torch to the next generation of leaders such as King and Parks. Howard moved from the Mississippi Delta to Chicago where he ran for Congress and built the

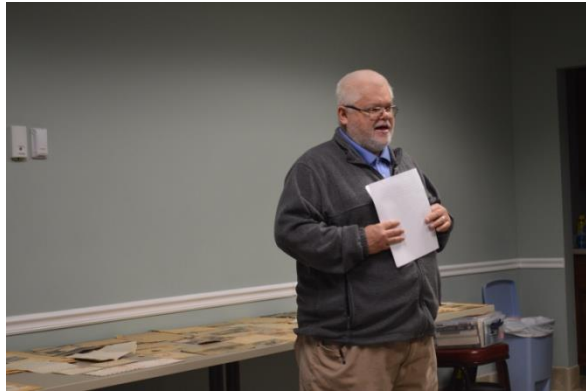
first all African American owned hospital in the country. Howard died in 1976, leaving a legacy focused on the betterment of the African American community throughout the United States.

(Richard D. Parker & William H. Mulligan, Jr.)

*Note: The Beitos' Book on TRM Howard won first prize for best biography for the Independent Book Publishers of America. The Jackson Purchase Historical Society is grateful to the sponsors of this presentation: Dr. Earnest*

& Lola Berry, Dr. Dan Miller, Dr. Robert G. Fitch, Dr. Steve Trevathan, Dr. John R. Bright, and Dr. William H. Mulligan, Jr, in memory of his parents, William H. and Aileen K. Mulligan.

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David Heathcott, a docent leader at the Discovery Park of America in Union City, Tennessee, was the featured speaker at the March 2 meeting at the Graves County Public Library in Mayfield beginning at 10:30 am. Heathcott's talk was about Navy Fireman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Hal Jake Allison, one of 2,403 American deaths incurred during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Trapped in the capsized USS Oklahoma, Allison would become one of

nearly 400 crewmen buried as an unknown. Quietly we are in the midst of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the events of World War Two so this is a very timely program. His presentation highlighted the impact of the Second World War on families and the value of scrapbooks and other family papers to connect us tangibly to the past.

(William H. Mulligan, Jr.)



The Allison Family Scrapbook and Documents

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Richard "Rick" Justice, a teacher in the Sikeston, Missouri public schools and a volunteer at Columbus Belmont State Park, was the featured speaker at the May 18 meeting of the Jackson



Purchase Historical Society. The meeting was held at the Hickman County Historical and Genealogical Society on the Court Square in Clinton. Justice's recent book, *Tennessee Blitz: Nathan Bedford Forrest's Lightning Raids in Western Tennessee* sets aside many of the controversies and examines why Forrest was so successful as a cavalry officer and especially as a behind the lines raider. Nathan Bedford Forrest needs no introduction to

students of Jackson Purchase history or the history of the Civil War. While aspects of Forrest's life and career are controversial, few can deny he was an effective cavalry commander and caused a great deal of disruption in the larger Jackson Purchase and beyond during the Civil War. Ed Bearss, long time Chief Historian of the National Park Service said many times. "Bedford Forrest could wreck a Railroad." Justice certainly illustrated that as well as many other aspects of Forrest's career. Among those in attendance was long-time Society member, past-president, and author of three books on Nathan Bedford Forrest, Dr. Lonnie Maness.

(William H. Mulligan, Jr.)

## President's Report 2018-2019

I am happy to report that the Society had a highly successful year. In addition to holding six meetings and publishing our *Journal* we increased the amount of Jackson Purchase historical information we post on our Facebook page. If you have not liked our page go on Facebook and search for Jackson Purchase Historical Society. We had a very successful set of programs again. There are a lot of very good people working on Purchase history. The Board has authorized their nomination for a Kentucky Historical Society Award. We will also be nominating the 2018 *Journal*. Editor Jim Humphreys put together another outstanding issue. This is a good time to thank the Filson Historical Society in Louisville for allowing us to reprint the late Thomas Clark's article on the Jackson Purchase Treaty from their journal. Dr. Clark was a tireless scholar, advocate, and protector of the resources for Kentucky history. His article remains the standard account. There are other classic essays in Jackson Purchase history out there. I had thought to publish a collection of them for the bicentennial, but life intervened. Speaking of our *Journal*, our joint project with MSU Libraries is nearing completion. Thanks to Melissa Webb Earnest for maintaining the website and increasing its usefulness. Her work on that has been very much appreciated. She has asked me to see if we can find an assistant, possible successor. If interested let me know. One project that did not move ahead as fast as we had hoped was the Encyclopedia. We received a small number of submissions and are redesigning our recruitment plan. We hope to make more progress with the Encyclopedia in 2019-2020.

In July we reelected the slate of officers who had served in 2017-2018. They are listed elsewhere in this *Journal*. Your officers are all active people and devote a great deal of time to the Society. Through their efforts we spread the news of the work of the Jackson Purchase Historical Society. We did programs for a number of groups including the Ballard-Carlisle County Chamber of Commerce, the Warren Thomas Museum in Hickman, the Murray